

## Williamson Turn

A Williamson Turn is a maneuver used to turn a vessel and put it on an exact reverse course. This will be an occasional feature in the *MARAD Update*, using the archives of the Office of Congressional and Public Affairs and other sources, to revisit a point previously passed through: a point in time.

### Bob Hope's Christmas Radio Broadcast to the U.S. Merchant Marine Everywhere December 22, 1944

"This is Bob Hope speaking to you from Hollywood. Three days from now we'll be celebrating Christmas here in the United States. We'll gather around Christmas trees with our children and exchange presents with those we love. Merry Christmas with stars on the Christmas tree and stars in the eyes of our kids... and stars in the windows of our homes. Blue stars for those still at home. Gold for the men who'll be spending Christmas with God. And silver stars for the ones over there, like the boys I'm going to introduce to you in a moment.

They're Z-men. Did you ever hear of Z-men? Sounds like a gag, doesn't it? Well, it isn't. Z-men are the guys without whom General 'Ike's' Army and Admiral Nimitz's Navy couldn't live. Five thousand seven hundred of them have died from enemy torpedoes, mines, bombs, or bullets since our zero hour at Pearl Harbor.

Z-men are the men of the Merchant Marine. They carry a big wad of identification papers in a book called a Z book, so they call them Z-men. They're union men, too. They work for scale. Yeah, scale! Joe Squires worked for scale. He was a seaman on the *S.S. Maiden Creek*. He and Hal Whitney, the deck engineer, stayed aboard to handle the lines so the rest of the crew could get away before the *Maiden Creek* sank under waves thirty feet high. The crew was saved. They never saw Joe or Hal again. Did anyone ever make a wage scale big enough to pay for a man's life? Joe and Hal gave theirs voluntarily. So did 5,698 others. Did anyone ever devise a scale big enough to make men brave?

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Marine.**

Listen, it takes nerve to go to work in a hot engine room, never knowing when a torpedo might smash the hull above you and send thousands of tons of sea water in to snuff out your life. It takes courage to sail into the waters of an enemy barbaric enough to tie your hands and feet and submerge you so you can drown, like a rat, without a fight. It takes courage to man an ammunition ship after you heard how Nazi bombers blew up 17 shiploads of ammunition at Bari, [Italy,] and not a man was ever found of the crews. I was there about that time. I'll never forget it. Neither will men like Admiral King, who said, 'The Navy shares life and death, attack and victory, with the men of the U. S. Merchant Marine.' Yeah, it's Merry Christmas, Monday, for a lot of us except the boys of the Army, Navy, and Merchant Marine. Our Z-men will be on the high seas or in ports far away from home.

Before this program is over, you'll hear their ship leaving with another cargo for the war zone, a cargo like 500,000 tons of vital supplies and the 30,000 troops the Merchant Marine delivered for General MacArthur in the first three weeks on Leyte. Like the 70 million tons it delivered to all the fighting fronts in 1944.

Seventy million tons! Ninety percent of all the war supplies we used all over the world. These boys won't be in the United States for Christmas, so the USS—United Seamen's Service—is providing them with an early Christmas party, which we're all invited to attend."

Then the broadcast cut to an announcer speaking live from the flying bridge of a Liberty ship, where the crew was having an early Christmas party. The program closed to a choir singing, while in the background listeners heard the sounds of the ship departing.

The full text of this broadcast is available at [www.usmm.org/quotes.html](http://www.usmm.org/quotes.html).

Source: December 1998 Newsletter, American Merchant Marine Veterans, Midwest Chapter, and [The Ugly Duckling](#)